

Role of Trees in the Path of Enlightenment – A Psychological Review

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Abstract:

What is enlightenment? How enlightenment is linked to tall trees? How the presence of fig tree, pine tree and other trees influence the process of enlightenment? How trees are linked to higher consciousness? Answer to these four questions is the main purpose of this study. The long-term objective of this study is to develop a theoretical framework of enlightenment in the background of tall trees. The psychology of human enlightenment is reviewed in the background of tall trees. We reviewed the impact of trees on human psychology. We reviewed the role of tall trees in the process of enlightenment of great world teachers like Gautama Buddha, Socrates, and Sri Amit Ray. The paper concludes that trees have deep link to elevate human consciousness to higher levels.

Keywords: Enlightenment, psychology of trees, Gautama Buddha, Sri Amit Ray, Socrates, trees and human consciousness, physiological relaxation.

Introduction:

Trees have a long and rich history of sharing the path of enlightenment with humanity. Trees are constantly in meditation, and radiating subtle positive energy is their natural language. Human enlightenment is a state of elevated awareness and perception in which a person has a deeper understanding of the nature of reality, the self and various spiritual aspects of life that play an important role in one's personal evolution, personal psychological development as well as larger role for uplifting total human consciousness. The enlightenments of Gautama Buddha, Socrates, Sri Amit Ray and many others are deeply linked with trees.

The psychology of enlightenment and the psychological impact of trees are not studied much. Until recently, research psychologists avoided serious consideration of such exceptional inner transformational experiences, largely because of the lack of a sufficiently comprehensive theoretical framework to interpret the significance of the reported experiences, the lack of an experimental paradigm to test the verity of the experiences, and the lack of a systematic subjective methodology to replicate the experiences.

However, recently researchers attempt to study states of human consciousness and differences in perception in order to understand how the body, mind and environment work to produce higher level consciousness. Due to advancement of technology these two new areas of research, the psychology of enlightenment and the psychological impact of trees on consciousness are gaining momentum. This research is attempted to find out the missing link between environment, trees and the higher levels of human consciousness. Several obstacles exist in this search. One is a lack of consensus on the meaning and operationalization of the concept of enlightenment. Another is the lack of a comprehensive framework in which to investigate the way in which trees and human consciousness function and adapt in a constantly changing environment.

Physiological effects of Trees:

Scientific studies suggest that viewing even an image of a tree or a forest canopy bolsters the parasympathetic division of the central nervous system that naturally induces calm [1].

The Japanese have longed practiced *Shirin-yoku*, taking in the forest atmosphere or “forest bathing,” to alleviate stress, aggression, fatigue, and feelings of depression. Field experiments conducted in 24 forests across Japan found that either walking in the woods (16 ± 5 min) or stationary viewing of the trees (14 ± 5 min) reduced levels of the stress hormone cortisol in saliva samples [2].

A recent study investigated the physiological effects of touching wood in comparison with touching other materials. The study revealed that touching wood with the palm calms prefrontal cortex activity and induces parasympathetic nervous activity more than other materials, thereby inducing physiological relaxation [3].

Psychology of Enlightenment:

What is enlightenment? Enlightenment is a deep transformation process of consciousness and feeling oneness with the whole world. Enlightenment, Cosmic Consciousness, Awakening, Nirvana, Transcendence, Transformation, Heaven Within and Paradise on Earth, it has been a goal of most of humanity for millennia. Awakened individuals may not live in a state of complete uninterrupted bliss, but they are generally much more content than other people. One major source of this well-being is freedom from the psychological discord that plagues human beings in our sleep state — habitual worry about the future, feelings of negativity about the past, and a general sense of unease. Spiritually awakened people are much less prone to negative states such as boredom, loneliness, and dissatisfaction. The atmosphere of their inner world is less charged with negativity and much more harmonious. As Eckhart Tolle said, “You are not in the universe; you are the universe, an intrinsic part of it. Ultimately you are not a person, but a focal point where the universe is becoming conscious of itself. What an amazing miracle.” Sri Amit Ray said “Suddenly you become the mother of the Universe, eager to protect, transform and care every soul of the world.” The intensity of

the characteristics of enlightenment obviously varies according to the intensity of a person's overall wakefulness.

Enlightenment and Trees:

Enlighten people not only have fulfilling events in their lives but they are the source of inspiration for their contribution to the humanity. Enlightenment is not only for individual healing, but for the healing of all beings – their presences become a healing presence in the world. Trees not only can absorb carbon dioxide and transform it into oxygen, but they can also absorb negative forces and transform them into good energy. Trees strongly root with the Earth, and the more rooted the tree, the higher it can extend to Heaven. Trees stand very still, absorbing the Earth's Energy and the Universal Force from the Heavens. Trees are the largest and most spiritually advanced plants on earth. As your understanding of this language grows, you can begin to develop a relationship with them. Gautam Buddha became enlightened sitting under a tree. Sri Amit Ray became enlightened under a pine tree. Socrates was standing under a tree when he became enlightened and a similar story is told about Krishnamurti and other saints and sages.

Tree and the Enlightenment of Gautama Buddha

Gautama Buddha is believed to have attained enlightenment after 49 days of meditation, sitting under a fig tree—now known as Bodhi Tree—in Bodh Gaya, India. For seven days after being enlightened, Buddha sat under the Bodhi Tree, experiencing the happiness of freedom and peace. It is said that during the second week, Buddha kept looking at Bodhi Tree, in thanks and gratitude to the tree that had sheltered him during his struggle.

For six years Siddhartha was engaged in rigorous asceticism. He tortured himself, held his breath, and fasted until his ribs stuck out "like a row of spindles" and he could almost feel his spine through his stomach. Yet enlightenment seemed no closer. Then he remembered something. Once as a boy, while sitting under a rose apple tree on a beautiful day, he had spontaneously experienced great bliss and entered the first higher level of consciousness, meaning he was absorbed in a deep meditative state. His enlightenment transforms the world.

Tree and the Enlightenment of Sri Amit Ray

Sri Amit Ray is a well-known enlightened person in modern world. He is known to the world for radiating love, peace and compassion. In his path of enlightenment, nature, especially trees and birds played special roles. From childhood Ray had a subtle skill to communicate with trees. He lost that skill as he grew up. But one morning while he was walking near a big maple tree in Hauppauge, Long Island, he saw few leaves of the tree become golden, bright and lighted. He entered into the state of deep Samadhi absorption. He rapidly passed through various realms of consciousness. The maple tree taught him the lessons of enlightenment through the beauty of nature. It shows how beauty of the nature has the power to transcend the limits of time-and-space, the limits of body, mind and soul. Similarly, while he was at

Uttarkashi, Himalaya one morning the dance of a red robin on the top of a pine tree gives him the deepest feeling of Universal oneness and bliss.

Tree and the Enlightenment of Socrates

One summer day Socrates and his young friend Phaedrus take a walk along the Ilissus River. It was an unusual setting for Socrates. They find a comfortable place under a plane-tree where they give themselves up to where they discuss the nature of love, among other topic. At first he demonstrates fully indifferent to nature. Socrates said "I am a lover of learning, neither trees nor nature teach me anything – but the people in the city do." After a while, a radical change happens to Socrates. Now Socrates speaks a second time about Love. Enlightenment happens to him. Spiritual communion with trees and nature change his level of consciousness and he became enlightened. The trees and the nature opened the door of higher consciousness.

Trees and Spirituality:

The best trees for healing are big trees, especially pines and fig trees. Pine trees and fig trees radiate Chi, nourish blood, strengthen nervous systems, and contribute to long lives. They also nurture souls and spirits. Pines are known as the "Immortal Tree." Fig trees are known as "The Tree of Life" In every religion trees have linked with spirituality. In Islam, the "Fig" appears only once in the Quran, while the "Olive" is mentioned several times.

Bible and the Fig Tree:

The story of the fig tree begins in the Garden of Eden, where YEHOVAH God had placed in the midst of the Garden two special trees: **the Tree of Life** and **the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil**. Adam was told that he might eat of every tree in the Garden except the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, "for in the day that thou eatest there of thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:9, 16-17). The serpent, in whatever form he may have taken at that time, tempted Eve with the lie, "Ye shall not surely die, for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:4-5). And so, beguiled by his cunning, she ate of the fruit, and gave it also to Adam, who likewise partook of it. "And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons [or girdles]" (verse 7).

Now there is a certain enigma attached to this scripture as to what the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil really was -- certainly not an apple, as popular tradition has it. But the fact that Adam and Eve used fig leaves to cover themselves shows that there is a link between the fig tree and the Tree of Knowledge.

Bhagavad Gita and the Banyan tree

Bhagavad Gita describes a "cosmic fig-tree" whose roots are in the sky, whose fruits are on earth. It is the peepal tree (sacred fig), of the banyan tree family.

“With roots above and branches below, the Fig tree is said to be imperishable, with the wisdom as its leaves. He, who knows this, knows the essence of all wisdom.” -- Bhagavad Gita [Verse 15.1]. Again Bhagavad Gita describes the cosmic – consciousness as: “Of all trees I am the holy fig tree, and amongst sages and demigods I am Narada. Of the singers of the gods I am Citraratha, and among perfected beings I am the sage Kapila.” -- Bhagavad Gita [Verse 10.26].

Trees and Morality Development:

Multiple studies suggest that tree-filled areas have relatively low rates of crime and domestic violence because trees relieve stress, and promote a sense of safety and interaction among residents. Communities that have a high level of resident interaction are shown to have higher levels of safety, regardless of economic conditions, because residents are willing to look out for one another. The ability of urban trees to relieve extreme heat and reduce noise pollution has also been linked to decreases in violent behaviour. Trees have also been linked to faster recovery from illness. Studies have found that patients with views of trees from their hospital window have faster recovery times than those without.

Tress for Elevating Human Consciousness

Trees make neighbourhoods more walk-able by shading hot sidewalks, providing scenery, and buffering pedestrians from traffic, noise, and pollution. Studies show that by coming into contact with a tree you will pick up positive vibrations whether you are consciously aware of it or not. You begin to resonate with the tree’s energy and you become more centred and grounded. Trees operate on a longer time scale than do human beings. Spiritual communion with trees resembles lovemaking more than any other human activity. As such, a quality of sensuality and tenderness should be present. Trees obviously do not have physical brains. However, some plant scientists insist they are — since they can sense, learn, remember and even react in ways that would be familiar to humans.

Conclusion:

We studied the role of tall trees in the process of enlightenment of great world teachers like Gautama Buddha, Socrates, and Sri Amit Ray. Fig tree, maple tree, pine tree has a positive role in elevating the human consciousness. Ancient scriptures support the role of trees for enlightenment. Recent scientific studies confirm the parasympathetic activation of trees on human consciousness. Our preliminary study concludes that trees have deep positive link to elevate human consciousness to higher levels. However, further research is required to know the exact mechanisms of environment, trees on developing higher levels of human

consciousness at various levels. It is our hope that this review highlights the importance of tree as a potential catalyst for developing higher levels of human consciousness.

References:

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